DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 127 615 CS 202 882

TITLE	Press, Radio, and TV Tips for Education Associations. PR Bookshelf No. 9.
INSTITUTION	National Education Association, Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE	69
NOTE	35p.
AVAILABLE FROM	NEA Order Department, The Academic Building, Saw Mill Road, West Haven, Connecticut 06516 (Stock No. 381-11922, $1.00)
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.83 Plus Postage. HC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	Education; Expository Writing; *Mass Media; *News Media; Newspapers; *News Reporting; *Organizations (Groups); *Public Relations; Radio; Television

ABSTRACT

This booklet contains suggestions and techniques aimed at those individuals in education associations who are in charge of news media relations for their organizations. The following aspects of reporting news to the media are discussed: getting organized and acquainted, thinking like a newsperson, writing clearly and simply, typing the news release, finding feature news, handling pictures, using newspapers vs. radio and TV, when to call a news conference, and treating newspeople honestly and fairly. The appendixes include basic suggestions for news media directors preparing releases, three sample news releases, and a discussion of the Fog Index. (LL)

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9

for education associations

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2

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In one sentence, then, the design symbolizes the forward thrust of education through a united teaching profession. Registration of this symbol with the U.S. Patent Office as a "collective membership mark" has been completed.

Attractive enamel and silver jewelry containing this symbol—pins, lapel buttons, tie tacks, charms, and tie bars—may be purchased by those who are members of local, state, and national associations. Decals for automobile and classroom windows and name tags for meetings are free. For information and order blanks for these items, write to the membership division of your state association or to the Division of Affiliates and Membership, NEA, 1201 16th St. N.W., Washington, D.C, 20036.

CONTENTS

	page
Get Organized, Then Acquainted	3
Try To Think Like a Newsman	4
Keep the Writing Simple, Clear	7
Type the News Release	8
Finding Feature News	9
What About Pictures?	12
Newspapers *vs.* Radio, TV	15
When To Call a News Conference	19
Treat Newsmen Honestly, Fairly	21
Appendices	
Appendix A	25
Appendix B	27
Appendix C	28
Appendix D	29
Appendix E	31

A service of the public relations department of your state association and the NEA's Division of Press, Radio, and Television Relations.

Foreword

Teachers are news!

All over the country, in small communities and in urban areas, the concerns, accomplishments, and actions of teachers and education associations are being reported with increasing frequency in newspapers, on radio, and on television.

Professional educators, through education associations, are rapidly becoming education spokesmen in communities. Education news, and the association with it, has moved from the back pages of the newspaper to the front page. Teachers are now playing an active role in determining the scope and type of educational programs offered in communities.

Reporting, through the mass media, the proposed programs and problems of teachers is a task some associations have avoided. It's a job that hasn't been done thoroughly because, as one association officer put it, "I'm just a teacher." He, like others, felt he lacked experience in the techniques of working with newsmen to interpret concerns of teachers to the public.

Education associations not only have the right, but the responsibility, to direct public attention to the education accomplishments and needs of children and of teachers. For who should be able to report and interpret education concerns and problems better than teachers?

This booklet contains suggestions and techniques aimed at *one person*—the person in charge of news media relations for the association. (See booklet #4, *Internal PR*, Appendix A, of this "PR Bookshelf" series for the relationship of the news media chairman to the PR committee and its chairman.)

Get Organized, Then Acquainted

Only one person from the education association should contact newsmen. Various officers and members contacting the same reporter are bound to create some confusion. Newsmen appreciate having just one person serve as the link between the media and the association.

This doesn't mean the news media chairman will be quoted as official spokesman for the association. The official spokesman, in print and on the air, should be the association *president*. That's who members and the general public expect to be the spokesman. It's the job of the news media relations chairman to make sure press, radio, and TV hear from the association and its official spokesman—the president.

If last year's association news media chairman didn't leave a list of newsmen, one should be prepared.

The daily and weekly newspapers that circulate in the school district should be listed, as well as local radio and TV stations. To this local list should be added any large nearby daily papers that cover the community and any radio and TV stations in nearby cities that are listened to or watched by residents of the school district.

The contact person at a weekly newspaper will probably be the editor himself. A daily newspaper has many editors, so perhaps a reporter has been assigned to the "education beat." Otherwise, the contact would be the city editor, or the state or suburban editor of a metropolitan daily.

Direction of news in a radio or TV station rests with the news director; but in the absence of that position, the program director should be contacted. Most radio and TV stations will have a news director. If he doesn't handle education news, he should be able to give the name of a reporter who does. At small stations, the news may be read by the same person who plays records; thus, supplied education news may be most welcome due to the lack of reporting staff.

A telephone call will help discover *who* should be contacted at newspapers and stations. The editor or news director should be asked when meetings would be most convenient for him.

Before visits with newsmen, a brief fact sheet should be prepared. This should be typed and include the full name and office address of the association, the news media chairman's full name, school address, and his school and home telephone numbers.

The first visit should be brief. Newsmen are usually more pressed for time than most people. The Occidental Life Insurance Company of California, in its handbook for publicity chairmen, suggests the following about visiting with newsmen:

> They deserve your respect, but not necessarily your awe; they will appreciate your brevity, but not your curtness. Because it is a profession where people on the outside often seem to think they know better how to do the job than those on the inside, newspaper people will appreciate your gaining an understanding of how they work and of the standards they must meet.

The news media chairman should inquire about deadlines, how copy should be prepared, and the correct name, title, complete mailing address, and telephone number of the newsman, who should be told about the association and, briefly, what it does and stands for.

A get-acquainted visit with news personnel of large dailies or broadcast outlets in nearby metropolitan areas is most often done by telephone. The initial telephone call should be followed up with a brief typewritten fact sheet through the mail.

Try To Think Like a Newsman

Editors and broadcast news directors receive hundreds of publicity stories every week, many of them labeled NEWS. Most of them end up in the wastebasket.

Reports of activities and events will get printed or included in a news broadcast *if* the editor thinks that story will *interest* others and if it is *timely*.

The news media chairman must ask himself: "If I were not a member of the education association, would this story interest me?" If this answer is a fast *no*, the item should be dropped.

If the answer is *yes,* but the story doesn't get used, the timing of release should be checked. Newsmen deal in *today,* and sometimes settle for yesterday. Beyond that, except perhaps for small weekly newspapers, untimely news reports do not get into print or on the air. That's why news deadlines are important to know. It is also unrealistic to rush into the newsroom five minutes before a newspaper is set to go to press or a newsman is to go on the air and expect him to drop everything to accommodate a news report. He will do so only if it's an urgent and important story.

Let's assume the story to be written is *timely* and *interesting.* Trying to think like newsmen do is important in copy preparation. Basically, they look for the answers to the questions—WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, and WHY (and sometimes HOW). The five (sometimes six) questions should be answered in the first paragraph or two of the news release. This is referred to as the *lead,* and whether the copy is intended for the eye or the ear, most newspaper editors and broadcast newsmen start preparing news copy by making sure the reader, listener, or viewer is told—

5

WHO said it or did it.

WHAT was said or done.

WHERE it took place.

WHEN it occurred.

WHY it happened.

HOW it happened.

For example—

WHO—The Ourtown Education Association (OEA)

WHAT—Will present a list of eight items for negotiation to the school board

WHEN—At a meeting with school board negotiators Wednesday, April 30, 7:30 p.m.

WHERE—In the school office building, 7th and Pine Streets

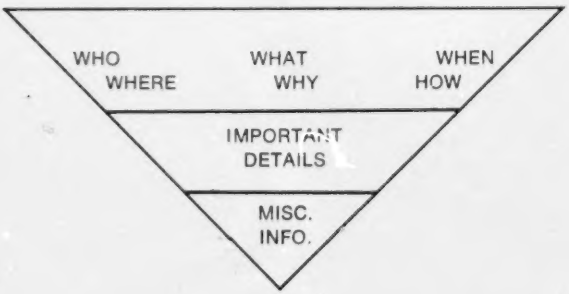
WHY—To formally present the concerns of Ourtown teachers in preparation for negotiating a new master agreement

HOW—By representatives of the OEA, the professional negotiating committee

Given these facts, a straight news story might look like this:

> The Ourtown Education Association (OEA) will present a list of eight items for negotiation at the first meeting of OEA and school board negotiating team members April 30.
>
> The meeting will begin at 7:30 p.m. in the school district office, 7th and Pine Streets.
>
> It will be the first negotiating session between school district representatives and the OEA, which represents the teachers of Ourtown schools.
>
> Representing the OEA are (names of PN committee members).

The most important points of the story, the five W's, are usually included in the first few sentences. The lead is intended to get the reader's attention and draw him into the story. It also helps the editor of a newspaper determine what to put in the headline that will accompany the story. Each succeeding paragraph after the lead should be of declining importance. The end of the story should contain the least important information. Why? Because newsmen edit from the bottom up, to meet demands of too little space or time. Vital information should never be at the end of a story, as is illustrated in the diagram below.



Keep the Writing Simple, Clear

Booklet #5 in this "PR Bookshelf" series, *Publishing a Newsletter*, offered some basic writing advice to editors of association newsletters. The same advice applies to writing for the mass media.

Copy should be composed of short words, short sentences, and short paragraphs. A newspaper column ranges from 1¾" to 2" and a five-minute radio newscast, even without a commercial announcement, can accommodate only 600 words of news, on a number of different stories.

In other words, conciseness is important. News copy should be double-spaced and preferably one page, seldom more than two.

A story should not use words that would not be used in everyday conversation. If technical or professional terms must be used—such as *negotiation*—the sentences should be brief. In some communities, *contract talks* will carry much more meaning than *negotiation*.

Exact dates are needed: "April 3" rather than "next Thursday" or "tomorrow", "March," not "next month." Every date and day of the week must be checked on the calendar.

Assuming the reader knows a particular piece of information, such as an address, can lead to confusion. It must be noted, as well as the name of the meeting place.

Adjectives aren't needed when writing a news story. If the meeting was *outstanding* or a speaker *dynamic*, a factual description will indicate these qualities. Editorial comments or opinions should be omitted.

Figures in a news story should be consistent. As a general rule, numbers are spelled out from one to nine; numerals are used from 10 on. A number beginning a sentence is spelled out. The Associated Press stylebook is a good reference and is available at most newspaper offices.

Consistency is also needed in terminology and style. Is it *inservice* or *in-service*, *dropout* or *drop-out*, *preschool* or *pre-school*, *counselor* or *counsellor?* A decision based on observation, examining the style of newspapers, and the editor's opinion should be followed regularly.

Above all: honesty and accuracy. When handing a story to an editor or broadcast newsman, the association's news media chairman in effect becomes a part-time member of the reporting staff. If newsmen find the copy accurate, it is likely that it will be published or broadcast. Misinformation or careless mistakes will appear in print or be heard by thousands of people. Newsmen will quickly lose confidence and stop using association information. The truth must be told—even if it hurts. That is the way to win the solid confidence of newsmen.

When a news story is finished, it should be read over. All unnecessary adjectives and other words that frequently are unnecessary—the, an, a, etc.—should be deleted.

Type the News Release

News releases should always be typewritten on 8½" x 11" plain white paper (unless the association has news release letterhead). Newsmen should not receive carbons or copies cranked out on the purple ditto! The release should be duplicated on a mimeograph machine or a copying process of comparable quality, such as Xerox.

A story should begin at least one-third down from the top of the first page, with all copy double-spaced. That leaves the newspaper editor room to write the headline. Some writers of news releases suggest a headline; others omit it—there's no uniform agreement. Recent surveys show, however, that newsmen appreciate an appropriate headline, based on the story, that gives them a clue to the subject of the story.

Reference information should be typed, single-spaced, in the upper left corner of the first page. This includes the name of the association and office address, name and complete address of the news media chairman, and the telephone number (both night and day) where he can be reached should the newsman have a question about the story, want more information, or need to clarify a point.

The release date is in the upper right corner of the first page. IMMEDIATE RELEASE, if appropriate, and the date should be indicated.

News copy has wide margins on both sides and a page should always end with a complete sentence and a complete paragraph—never jump a sentence from one page to the next. If there is a second page, (MORE) is typed under the last paragraph at the bottom of the first page. The end of the story is indicated by a few # # # under the last paragraph.

Each paragraph is indented. Copy written in all capital letters is too hard to read (except, in some instances, for broadcast use). If newsmen have trouble reading the story, they may not bother with it.

Persons named in the release should be completely identified. The first time a person's name is used, it is not Mr. Jones or Tom Jones, but Thomas M. Jones, president of the OEA. Once a person's full name has been used, he can be referred to as "Mr. Jones." Check for the correct spelling of all names. Newsmen don't have time to track down small, but important, details.

If the association can control the release time on some stories, there should be a balance between utilizing morning and afternoon news media.

Sample association news releases appear as Appendices B, C, and D in this booklet, to illustrate the style and appearance of typical news releases. After a few have been completed, the "Fog Index" may be used to check readability. Robert Gunning, author of *The Technique of Clear Writing*, has developed a simple formula, which appears in Appendix E, to check the readability of writing. For easy reading, news copy should be written at a sixth- to eighth-grade level.

Finding Feature News

Feature news differs from day-by-day reporting of hard news. Features lean toward the entertainment element of a newspaper or newscast, and are usually based on some timely item of interest. Features may be historical, human interest, biographical, travel, how-to-do-it, or of a more serious nature, such as student concerns or problems.

People are curious about one another. News stories that rely on that interest are called human-interest features. As the

newspaper version puts it, "Get a child or a dog and you've got the beginning of a good feature story." Teachers deal daily with many lively topics of interest to almost everyone—children. Classrooms are filled with interesting, unusual, entertaining events that often can make good feature stories for newsmen. The difficult task is finding a way to get teachers to be aware of interesting classroom activities and to pass the accounts along to the association's news media chairman as ideas for feature stories.

The secret to securing interesting classroom news features is organizing a reporting system within the teaching staff. This is a natural project for an association's PR committee.

The news media chairman should *establish a beat system.* The school district territory is divided into beats or rounds. A teacher in each school building keeps an eye open for news feature tips from teachers. The teacher-reporters might be the same ones utilized by the association editor to report news. It's best to recruit teacher-reporters through personal contact with association members, just as the teacher-reporters themselves will need personal contact to get story ideas from fellow teachers.

10

To feed in news feature tips, teachers should not be expected to write out the entire story. All that is needed is the tip, the idea of a possible story, so that it can be relayed to a newsman to see if he thinks it has possibilities.

News media chairmen shouldn't be afraid to suggest feature ideas to newspaper editors or television news directors. The greater the number of people the feature idea may interest, the better the chance it will attract an editor's interest. He may rule it out, or come up with a different angle than had been suggested. But that's his job. The news media chairman's job, as the association's link with the news media, is to offer the idea; if the editor or news director likes it, he'll send one of the regular reporters to cover the story.

Editors know that readers are interested in children and in those who teach children. Teachers need to be reminded that the following types of stories are usually of news value:

- Success stories of students and graduates
- Individual students who have overcome certain handicaps to accomplish a project or attain success

- The youngster who has done well in a subject through unusual or exceptional effort
- Awards, honors (avoiding long lists of names), contests, festivals
- Methods of instruction
- Any instructional project carried out in an unusual or different fashion
- Results of new techniques of instruction in comparison with the old way (This is particularly good if a marked response is found to the new method.)
- How a subject is taught; individual students' reaction to it
- Professional activities of teachers, conference and convention attendance, especially if the teacher participated in a program or served as resource person (After the teacher's name, grade or subject, and school, always include "a member of the Ourtown Education Association.")
- Professional honors or awards given to teachers, such as summer study grants or scholarships, advanced degrees, etc.
- Report of an interesting or unusual summer job or summer travel experience of a teacher.

11

These are a few examples of the type of things that may prove to be interesting human-interest feature stories. The next step after organizing a beat system of reporters is to send teachers a monthly reminder.

The advice of association newsletter editors is not to send teachers a note asking for items for possible stories. Most teachers think that what is happening to them is of no particular interest to anyone. Few understand what's news.

How many feature tips would come in from the bait on the following page? Very few, probably.

A better method is a news request form which lists possible feature ideas and asks teachers to check the ones that could come from their building. When news tips are received, a follow-

ATTENTION: ALL OEA MEMBERS

I need to suggest some feature news ideas to my editor at the daily newspaper. The deadline for good ideas is February 2. Please send feature ideas to me through the interschool mail by that date.

Joe Blaze
News Media Chairman, OEA

up telephone call is needed to learn the details. If it has possibilities, it goes on to a newsman for reaction. On the following page is the same list of feature ideas, included in a news request form.

12

What About Pictures?

Not only are pictures worth a thousand words, but if they're good, newspapers and TV stations want them. Unlike news copy, photography is an area of publicity where the association may have to budget some money for equipment or outside services. Teachers with photography as a hobby often make excellent members of the news media chairman's committee.

Weekly newspapers seldom have a staff photographer, but weekly editors are usually glad to get and print photos if they have some news value. The weekly editor should be consulted for his policy. If he will take association photos, the types and sizes he prefers should be ascertained.

When in doubt, and when a good picture is important, a professional photographer should be employed. It's money well spent.

Daily newspapers and TV stations have definite policies on photos. The editor or news director can provide information about needs and requirements. Directions as to size and finish of prints should be followed carefully. Most of the time, it's wise to call the newsman in advance to ask if he wants a picture of

Fellow Teacher:

Take ONE MINUTE to look over this checklist of possible news feature ideas. Do you have a situation like any of these in your school?

Just check the one that applies and return the form to me in the interschool mail. I'll call you for details.

Many thanks!

Joe Blaze
News Media Chairman, OEA
Mill Elementary

_____Success story of a student or grad

_____Accomplishment of an individual student who overcame a handicap

_____Student who has done unusually well through exceptional effort

_____Awards, honors, citations to a student or students (no long lists, please)

_____Interesting method of instruction

_____Instructional project being carried out in unusual or exceptional fashion

_____Resource person from the community making a presentation to a class

_____Results of a new instructional idea in comparison with the old way

_____Professional meeting attendance by a teacher, program participation by a teacher

_____Professional honors, awards, grants, scholarships awarded a teacher

_____Unusual part-time or summer job or travel experience of a teacher

REPORTER_____SCHOOL_____

13

an event. He may want to send out his own photographer if the story is especially newsworthy.

If the association takes the photos, or sets up the shot for a photographer, action subjects should be chosen. The people in the picture should not simply be looking at the camera! Small-group photos are best, with no more than three or four people in a picture. The principals in any photo should be very close together, almost crowded. If the photographer has been sent from the newspaper or TV station, the news media chairman should ask him what he wants to take.

Photo subjects are identified *left to right*. The cutline—a piece of paper with full names, including middle initial, and titles or offices typed on it—is pasted or taped to the back of the photo before it is sent to the editor. Paper clips usually scratch the finish of the photo. Writing on the back of a photo may also cause difficulty. Both methods damage the print finish and spoil reproduction.

14 If the association is supplying pictures, glossy prints at least 5″ x 7″ are used. Standard size is 8″ x 10″. The bigger the photo, the better the detail of reproduction when the picture is reduced to illustrate a one- or two-column newspaper story.

The TV news director, or program director, might like the association to provide slides of association officers for the newsroom "morgue" file. Television news is a combination of copy and photos and TV newsmen always try to illustrate news with still or action pictures whenever possible. The newsroom maintains a file of photos of important people who may be or usually are in the news. When they make news, the newsman on duty pulls out a head-and-shoulders picture of the person, and uses it during the oral description of what that individual said or did.

When association officers are elected, it should be standard procedure to provide all TV stations in the area with either black-and-white or color 35mm slide shots of each individual officer. The news media chairman should ask the news director which type he wants, shoot closeups, and deliver a set of slides, each clearly identified, to the news director with the story announcing the election of officers.

Newspapers vs. Radio, TV

Competition for air time on radio and TV is more intense than for newspaper space. The broadcast day is measured in minutes. While newspapers add pages to an edition if they have the advertising to carry it, radio and television are limited by the number of hours they are licensed to be on the air.

Yet the broadcast industry contributes quite a bit of air time for public service announcements every year. Education associations may be entitled to some of the time if the information appeals to a large audience. The news media chairman should check with the program director and news director of local stations to discover the type of programs, spot announcements, and news items that might be of interest to listeners and viewers.

The message must be important, of widespread interest, and presented in the best possible form. It's a good practice to listen to stations to become acquainted with the kinds of announcements used.

Few association PR chairmen or news media chairmen utilize radio and TV news coverage. Many are print-oriented and forget about the important role and impact of radio and TV news. Prime listening time on local radio is early morning and late afternoon, when people are getting ready for the day's activities and driving to work, or are on the way home. 15

Broadcasters can't give the details which a newspaper will, but they like to report summary news events—and particularly *local* news happenings.

When writing for both print and broadcast media, it is important to remember that copy for radio and TV news must contain the same essential facts as that prepared for the newspaper, but that there are some differences worth noting.

Radio copy is more informal, repetitious, and general. The basic five W's lead required for print media may say too much at one time for the listener to grasp. Radio newsmen will rewrite a newspaper-style lead paragraph to cover those five W's more gradually. Repetition is more evident, as the listener cannot recapture what was said. Names, then, are repeated. Minor details are omitted from broadcast news—there just isn't enough time.

For radio and TV, paragraphs of copy are shorter and more numerous. Each page of copy ends with a complete paragraph. Copy should be TRIPLE-SPACED. Proper nouns, especially people's names, that are difficult to pronounce should be clarified for the news announcer:

The new president is Alexander Lyszak (LIE-ZACK).

The average newscaster reads about 150 words per minute. The average news item in a five-minute radio newscast is 20 seconds. Copy should be judged accordingly. When time doesn't permit rewriting for broadcast, the same release that goes to the newspaper may be sent, but this means that the broadcast newsmen will have to rewrite it. If they lack time, it may not get on the air.

For example, here's a release for a newspaper (it would be double-spaced, of course):

16

Richard A. Wentworth, a mathematics teacher at North High School, was elected president of the Mytown Education Association (MEA) for the 1969-70 school year.

Mr. Wentworth's election was announced Tuesday evening, April 30, at the MEA's annual spring banquet, held at the high school, 14th and Spring Streets.

Wentworth has been a member of the teaching staff of the high school for six years.

He served as vice-president of the local association last year, and has also been a member of the MEA's professional negotiating committee.

He will serve as president of the 660-member teachers association for a two-year period.

Wentworth succeeds Roscoe Thomas, Wyandotte Junior High School social studies teacher, who served as MEA president for the past two years.

# # #

And rewritten for radio and TV (triple-spaced):

> Mathematics teacher Richard Wentworth is the new president of the Mytown Education Association.
>
> Wentworth was elected last evening, April 30, at the education association's annual spring banquet, held at North High School, 14th and Spring Streets.
>
> He succeeds Roscoe Thomas, who served for the past two years.
>
> # # #

The association may wish also to present a program or series of programs for the public discussing teachers, the schools, or matters of particular association interest. The news media chairman should discuss this idea, proposed format, and content *fully*, but briefly, with the station's program director. He may agree that a proposed series is much more effective than programs broadcast in a spasmodic, hit-or-miss manner.

No radio or TV program should be attempted without long preparation and cooperative planning with station personnel. Programs that are all talk are usually at the bottom of the list for listener or viewer interest. Worst of all is a speech. Somewhat better is an interview, and still better is a panel discussion if the topic is timely and of wide interest.

Television adds one requirement to talk shows which teachers should be expert in providing—visual aids. Maps, books, pictures, charts, diagrams, and writing on a chalkboard can increase viewer interest in an interview or panel discussion.

Association members or officers who will be on the program will need to understand basic directions provided by station personnel. The association "talent" on the program must learn how to handle copy, how to speak into a microphone, and how to avoid unnecessary noise while on the air. Station personnel will offer advice.

The National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) has prepared a handy free guide, *If You Want Air Time*. This handbook is available from the program director of a station holding NAB membership or from the Association, 1771 N St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036. It contains basic tips on preparing material for radio and television programming.

Both radio and television stations are glad to receive public service spot announcement copy. Program directors are always glad to discuss ideas for spot announcements promoting education, the teaching profession, and the services provided by professional educators. The state association may have TV film clips or radio tapes for the local association to provide to broadcast media.

If the association plans public service announcements, here are some basic guidelines to keep in mind. *Radio spot announcements* run 10 seconds (25 words), 30 seconds (75 words), or 60 seconds (150 words). *Standard television announcements* are 10 seconds (about 12 words), 20 seconds (35 words), and 60 seconds (120 words). To visually illustrate TV announcements: one slide or photograph for each 10-second spot, two for a 20-second spot, and so on. Slides are preferable in most cases to photographs, although photographs can be used.

One other valuable and convenient tool preferred by radio newsmen is the taped insert for a news show. They will often be glad to tape-record the association president's statement for insertion in a news show as an *actuality*. It provides variety in a straight talk report of a newscaster and gives more visibility to the association leaders. Taped comments, of course, are brief, usually no more than 30 seconds. Tapes can be made directly from the telephone, at the station, or the association can supply them, using a good quality, portable tape recorder.

News efforts should not be confined to newspapers. The impact of radio and television is great. Radio and TV stations never have enough staff to cover the news in the way in which they would like. So the news media chairman must feed them regular news of the association and the profession.

And the association must not forget to take time out to pass on appreciation to broadcast personnel for help and assistance. NAB suggests this point to keep in mind:

> If a station gives you free time to advertise your cause, don't surprise the owner by having him open his newspaper to find that you *bought* a half-page. If you do, the next surprise may be your own when you seek free broadcast time.

Radio and TV stations have spot announcement time for sale. Purchasing time may be a good idea when the message desired cannot be broadcast to the community in the form of a public service announcement.

When To Call a News Conference

One of the most effective means of informing the public about an event or opinion is to hold a news conference. (Note the word *news* . . . radio and TV newsmen object to attending a *press* conference!) This method of issuing a public statement can be an excellent way to get the association's story publicized. Also, it's a good way to get the association's side of a controversy explained. In addition, the news conference is an excellent vehicle for breaking a news story simultaneously to competing media.

But one thing to keep in mind: *The subject must be newsworthy!* 19

Frederick E. Leuschner, director of public relations for the Pennsylvania State Education Association, offers these tips for what should be announced at a news conference:

- *Controversial matters* are worthy of a news conference because they provide a forum for discussion rather than a one-sided statement with little room for interpretation.
- *Explanations* of dramatic, concerted action by teachers, such as mass meetings, negotiation sessions, "vigils," etc., are many times most clearly made at news conferences.
- *Special events* (celebrations, teaching tools, new instruction techniques, etc.) may warrant a news conference to feature action, unusual photographic possibilities, or TV film coverage.

But a news conference should not be called to—

- Announce new personnel
- Announce a forthcoming meeting

- Make a one-sided statement
- Announce the results of an election.

The news conference site is important, for the background should blend with the kind of news being announced. If it's an education story, as most of the association's will be, a school setting might be appropriate. Whatever site is selected, it must be handy for newsmen, with convenient parking and telephones available.

Timing is important. Consideration must be given to the deadlines of morning and afternoon papers, TV newscasts, and radio news programs. If possible, timing of news conferences should reflect media needs. Afternoon papers need copy before noon, while morning newspapers prefer conferences concluded before 6 p.m. Alternate timing of news conferences helps maintain a balance.

Every news outlet in the association's coverage area should be invited to a news conference. The invitation should be in writing if it can be planned in advance (three days to a week), and there should be a telephone reminder as follow-up. If time is pressing, a telegram can be used; it's impressive, true, but this requires *important news*. A telephone invitation to a news conference is not advised unless there are urgent or late-breaking news developments. Don't promise newsmen anything the association's chief spokesman can't deliver. However the invitation is issued, the subject of the conference must be indicated, but not fully enough to spoil the impact of the story.

The host for the conference should be an association executive or official, who serves as spokesman. Experts should be on hand to answer in-depth questions and participate in exclusive interviews. Limit specialists to three; a large group is unwieldy and will diminish credibility.

All of the experts should observe the three R's of a news conference: *rested, rehearsed,* and *ready*. The job of the news media relations chairman is to prepare them in advance by firing every question at them which newsmen are likely to ask.

Invitations should be sent under the name of the news media chairman of the association, and he should be at the door to greet newsmen when they arrive. The chairman should open the con-

ference with a brief statement covering the subject, introduce the host and other experts, and hand out any background material and a copy of the opening statement. Attendance records should be kept with a simple sign-in sheet at the door.

News kits containing information about the subject are helpful. These can include background information on the topic, hosts, and facts about the association. These aid in correct spelling and accuracy in identification of spokesmen. Nothing belongs in the news kit that isn't essential to the topic under discussion, or the association sponsoring the conference.

The prepared statement should be brief. Newsmen should not arrive for a conference where they plan to fire questions and be handed a complete release with all of the information included. Their reaction will be: "Next time, just mail the release to me."

Not all newsmen arrive at the same time. Early arrivals can scan the prepared statement and have time to formulate questions. Prepared statements help TV newsmen decide the camera shots they need to get.

News conferences do not mix with parties. Newsmen enjoy a party, but they do not attend this meeting to relax. They come to work, get a story, and return to the newsroom to write copy. Coffee, perhaps, and a sweet roll might be appropriate. Entertainment can wait for another occasion.

Treat Newsmen Honestly, Fairly

The news media relations chairman for the association will get to know newsmen on a personal basis. And he'll soon learn what others have learned—good news relationships are simply good personal relationships.

Most newsmen are honest, hard-working citizens of the community who also care and are concerned about children and teachers. Fair and honest treatment is essential, without playing favorites.

Sometimes members or officers of the association get upset over a particular headline or misquoted remark. They'll want to call the newsman and demand it be changed.

Instead, in most instances try an approach similar to the one the officers of the Bay City (Mich.) Education Association (BCEA) used in the fall of 1969. They distributed the following letter to all Bay City teachers on the same day teachers voted to withhold services to demonstrate concern over the problems facing education.

The president of BCEA wrote this for the members:

> By and large, Bay City teachers have been fairly treated by the news media in our city throughout our negotiations. Reporting has been objective and thorough.
>
> Regular contact has been maintained with *The Times* and with radio and television newsmen. So far, since our negotiations began in April, we have sent a total of 23 news releases to the media. All of these releases have been utilized.
>
> But when teachers are forced to take drastic action, such as we have, to dramatize to the community the deteriorating teaching conditions of our schools, public opinion will not always be favorable.
>
> Newspapers and the electronic media will pay a great deal of attention to this controversy. Teachers in Bay City are page one news.
>
> When that happens, both sides will get their story reported. That's all your BCEA leaders ask of the news media. The only way to get every single word we wish publicized is to purchase space through advertising, or for radio and TV commercial broadcast announcements.
>
> Newspaper reporters do not write the headlines for the stories they submit to city editors. And, sometimes, a "bad" headline may provoke us. (It may even provoke the reporter who had nothing to do with that headline anyway!)
>
> Every single word we utter may not be broadcast or printed exactly as we had hoped. But honest newsmen will at least not change facts. And that's fair enough, to us, and to the general public.
>
> Editorials may not be supportive. That is the right of the man who owns the printing press. If our position is right, and we feel it is, our performance, coupled with a

strong BCEA-news media relationship we have developed, should produce fair and objective treatment on the editorial page.

We cannot ask for edited letters to the editor. The press has the right to print just what people write. But we can urge parents who agree with us to write their views and submit these to the voice-of-the-people columns.

Ads will be purchased by your BCEA to get our full story before the public.

A tape recorded message will provide telephonic answers to all citizens who call. We may have to purchase broadcast spot announcements on radio. We may have to print our own newsletter to this community to provide them with our full story.

We cannot rely on, nor really expect, a newspaper to do this job for us.

All we can ask for is what we have been getting—fair and objective thoroughness of coverage of BCEA news. If errors in fact should occur in these news reports, we will quickly call these to the attention of editors. But we cannot dictate the exact language of news stories nor seek to censor viewpoints expressed by the school board.

23

Our "good press" is really based upon our performance and behavior . . . as teachers and as a professional association.

If we continue to "perform" as we have, a good press will continue to be a natural by-product.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Basic Suggestions for News Media Chairmen Preparing Releases

SOME DO's:

1. Type the story on one side of the paper only; use standard 8½" x 11" paper.
2. Double-space. (Broadcast copy, triple-space.)
3. Leave the top third of the first page blank, except for the source information.
4. Source information should be at a top corner of the first page and should include:
    a. The full name and address of the organization, the writer's name and title
    b. A telephone number and home address if necessary where writer may be reached.
5. End each page with a complete paragraph. Never jump a sentence from one page to another.
6. Make it short. If a second page is necessary, always indicate (MORE) at the bottom of the first page.
7. Use any of the following marks to indicate the end of the story:

    # # # -30- XXXX

8. Leave generous margins around all sides of the page.
9. Consider deadlines of the daily and weekly papers. Be sure they get the story as far in advance as possible.
10. Send the news to the reporter or editor who will handle the story.
11. When making a personnel change announcement, lead off with the name of the person involved—not the name of the person making the announcement.
12. Completely identify every person mentioned in the story.
13. Skip the adjectives! Give the facts.

14. Use short words, short sentences, short paragraphs.
15. Know the subject. Get the story right the first time.
16. Make absolutely certain every name is spelled correctly.

SOME DON'T's:

1. Don't use all caps throughout the story.
2. Don't underline phrases in the story.
3. Don't send carbon copies, especially fuzzy copies on onion skin paper.
4. Don't send "dirty" copy that has been cluttered with editing marks.
5. Don't ask the editor to send clippings or tear sheets.
6. Don't ask for the return of a photograph unless it is one specifically requested by the editor.
7. Don't use highly technical language or "pedaguese."
8. Don't try to get too much in one story.
9. Don't call an editor to find out if and when he is going to use the story.
10. Don't try to pass off something as an exclusive if it isn't.
11. Don't tell the editor that his readers will be interested in the story. If it's news, he will recognize it.
12. Don't try to send a story a week, or some similar schedule. Wait until there is a real news story.
13. Don't hide unfavorable news; give them the true story.
14. Don't quote out of context unless it is certain the meaning of the sentence has not been altered.
15. Don't ask to check proofs on a story.
16. Don't try to pressure an editor.
17. Don't complain to the editor if the story is not used. Send him a better one next time!

—from Pennsylvania Newspaper Publishers' Association

Appendix B

Sample News Release

Ourtown Education Association
33 Main Street
Ourtown, Nebraska

For Further Information:
Frank Johnson
News Media Chairman
Telephone: 788-1678

July 25, 1970

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Ourtown Education Association (OEA) will present a list of eight items for negotiation at the meeting of the OEA and the school board negotiating team Wednesday, July 29. The meeting will be held at the school district offices, Seventh and Pine Streets.

Top consideration on the teachers' list will be the reduction of the pupil-teacher ratio in Ourtown classrooms from an average of 34 pupils to a maximum of 28.

OEA President Charles Ward, in stressing the importance of the ratio, said, "Research by the National Education Association and the Nebraska State Education Association shows emphatically that 34 pupils in a single classroom reduces the effectiveness of the learning process."

Other items on the OEA list for negotiation include elementary planning time, library improvements, music specialists, faculty parking, salaries, professional leave, and hospitalization insurance.

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Appendix C

Sample News Release

Anytown Education Association
John Jones, News Media Chairman
1234 E. Main Street
Anytown, Tennessee
Telephone: CA 2-0000

July 25, 1970

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Rep. William Smith (D-Cooper) will trace the activities of the 108th General Assembly in the field of school finance for members of the Anytown Education Association Wednesday, July 28.

Smith will be the featured speaker at the regular monthly meeting of the professional association, composed of more than 140 teachers in the city's schools. The meeting will be held in the Wilson High School auditorium, 11th and Court Streets.

A former high school art teacher, Smith has served in the Tennessee House of Representatives for 10 years and has been chairman of the House Education Committee for the past two sessions.

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Appendix D

Sample News Release

NEA NEWS

NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

PRESS, RADIO, AND TELEVISION RELATIONS

WASHINGTON, D.C. (202)223-9400 NEW YORK CITY (212)LT 1-2360

For Further Information:
Rozanne Ford

January 30, 1970

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NEA Upholds Teacher's Right
To Teach Race Relations in Texas

WASHINGTON, D. C.--A Texas high school teacher who was fired after teaching a six-day unit on race relations and prejudice is being supported by the National Education Association and the Texas Classroom Teachers Association.

The NEA DuShane Emergency Fund is paying legal fees and costs for Henry Keith Sterzing's suit in U. S. District Court for the Southern District of Texas in Houston. The Sugarland, Texas, educator is asking for reinstatement to his social studies teaching position in the Fort Bend Independent School District, and damages of $750,000. The DuShane Fund was created to protect the rights of educators.

Sterzing's teaching contract for 1967-68 was terminated in February 1968 on the grounds of "insubordination" after he had taught the unit on civil rights, using films approved by the school district and magazine articles.

Following a hearing, the Board of Trustees upheld its original decision. The case was appealed to the Texas Commissioner of Education who said that Sterzing's due process rights had been violated in the dismissal proceedings and that his dismissal was without any justifiable charge. However, he would not order the defendant school board to rehire Sterzing.

Sterzing has been unable to obtain another teaching position. He is presently employed as a civilian with the U.S. Air Force in Okinawa.

(More)

"The issue is the free exchange of ideas in the classroom," said Sterzing, who maintains he was most concerned about making his students aware of controversial issues. He claims that his rights of academic freedom and rights under the due process and equal protection clauses of the Fourteenth Admendment have been violated.

The students in his class were asked to read articles concerning race and prejudice and the tragic implications of these concepts for all people. The articles originally appeared in Saturday Review, Redbook, and Scholastic Scope. Several anthropologists and sociologists at the University of Houston and the University of Texas have signed a statement that these articles "are all valid statements of the scientific view of the concept of race." "Far from being biased," they continue, "we believe they represent the only tenable point of view on the concept of 'race' itself."

The NEA is also supporting the case of Robert Stevenson, a professor in the American Ideas Department of the University of South Florida, who was dismissed following press coverage of his off-campus anti-war activities. He claims his First Amendment and due process rights have been violated.

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Appendix E

The Fog Index

Robert Gunning developed a simple readability formula, employing only two factors: the average number of words in sentences and the number of multisyllabic words for each 100 words of text. The figure or index is roughly comparable to grades in the school system. The formula:

$$\frac{SL + 2PS}{5} + 3 = \text{Fog Index}$$

In this formula SL equals sentence length (for easy reading a sentence should include 20 words or less). PS equals percent of polysyllables. These are words of three or more syllables (for easy reading, polysyllables in one sentence should not exceed 10 percent). Gunning does not count as polysyllables any words that are capitalized or words that are combinations of short familiar words (such as bookkeeper, butterfly) or words which become polysyllabic by the addition of *ed* and *es*. The sum of SL plus PS should not exceed 30.

If a large number of long words must be used, balance may be maintained by keeping sentences short.

	Reading Level	
Fog Index	*By Grade*	*By Magazine*
17	College grad	
16	" senior	
15	" junior	
14	" soph	
13	" frosh	
12	High school senior	*Atlantic Monthly*
11	" " junior	*Harper's*
10	" " soph	*Time*
9	" " frosh	*Reader's Digest*
8	Eighth grade	*Ladies' Home Journal*
7	Seventh grade	*True Confessions*
6	Sixth grade	Comics

This is booklet #9 in a series of 10 booklets written for education associations by the public relations department of your state association and the NEA's Division of Press, Radio, and Television Relations.

Additional copies of this booklet can be obtained from your state association or at $1 each from Publications-Sales, National Education Association, 1201 Sixteenth Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036. Orders for $2 or less must be accompanied by payment. *Quantity discounts:* 2-9 copies, 10 percent; 10 or more copies, 20 percent.

Order Stock No. 381-11922, ***Press, Radio, and TV Tips.***

For further information about other booklets in this series, write to the public relations director of your state association or to PR Bookshelf, Division of Press, Radio, and Television Relations, 1201 Sixteenth Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

Other booklets in this series are—

Booklet #1—School Finance Campaign Handbook
#2—Tips for the PR Chairman
#3—The PR in PN
#4—Internal PR
#5—Publishing a Newsletter
#6—A Primer in Publicity
#7—The Feedback Process
#8—Developing Citizen Committees
#9—Press, Radio, and TV Tips
#10—Community Decision-Making